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ABSTRACT

A study examined the relation between the esteem, autonomy, job satisfaction, demographic characteristics, and expressed desire of industrial education teachers to leave the teaching profession. The study population consisted of 45 full-time industrial education teachers who taught in small, medium, and large departments (15 teachers from each category) in public comprehensive high schools located in downstate Illinois outside Chicago and its suburbs. Telephone interviews were used to gather data on the aforementioned variables, and the teachers' responses were recorded by using a six-point Likert-type scale. More than half of the teachers either did not intend to continue teaching or were unsure if they would continue teaching for the next five years. Low correlations were found between the decision to quit teaching and each of two measures: (1) mean satisfaction; and (2) satisfaction with salary and benefits. There was essentially no correlation between the intention to quit teaching and either mean actual esteem or mean actual autonomy, although the intention to quit teaching had a moderate negative correlation with principal recognition. There was essentially no correlation between the stated intention to quit teaching and any of the demographic characteristics examined. A multiple regression approach to predict general satisfaction identified principal recognition, satisfaction with teaching assignment, years in current assignment, and age, respectively, as accounting for 39 percent of the variance in general satisfaction. (MN)

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Relationships Among Esteem, Autonomy, Job Satisfaction, and the Intention to Quit Teaching of Experienced Industrial Education Teachers

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Relationships Among Esteem, Autonomy, Job Satisfaction, and the Intention to Quit Teaching of Experienced Industrial Education Teachers

Several studies of teacher satisfaction based on Maslow's (1954) theory of a needs hierarchy have repeatedly supported the importance of need fulfillment for job satisfaction (Carver & Sergiovanni, 1971; Frances & Lebras, 1982; Sweeney, 1981; and, Trusty and Sergiovanni, 1966). Without exception, these authors cite the three higher-order needs of esteem, autonomy, and self-actualization as being unfulfilled needs leading to low teacher satisfaction.

Of the three higher-order needs, esteem was found to be important in several studies (Chapman and Lowther, 1982; Edmunds, 1982; Sweeney, 1981; and, Weller, 1982). The measures of esteem in these studies included items related to recognition, status, and the need to be held in high regard.

Studies that have focused on job satisfaction of teachers, including industrial education teachers, most of which utilized mail questionnaires have consistently identified salary and fringe benefits as the greatest factor related to satisfaction and teacher turnover. Other factors, such as those in Maslow's (1954) hierarchy, have been identified as secondary. However, the nature of these secondary factors for industrial education teachers have received limited attention.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to determine the extent to which the stated intention to continue or discontinue employment in the teaching profession by experienced industrial education teachers was related to (1) job satisfaction, (2) esteem, (3) autonomy, and (4) selected demographic variables. This study also explored the relationships that existed between and among these variables.

Research Questions

The General Research Question of this study was: What are the relationships between and among perceived esteem, autonomy, job satisfaction, the expressed intention to quit teaching, and selected demographic variables. The General Research Question was investigated through the use of a series of more specific research questions.

Population and Sample

The population of this study was all full-time industrial education teachers who taught in public comprehensive high schools in downstate Illinois outside the city of Chicago and its suburbs and East St. Louis. Subjects were identified by randomly selecting school districts, high schools, and then an individual teacher. The sample was stratified according to "Department Size": "small" if one teacher; "medium" if two or three teachers; and "large" if four or more industrial education teachers were in the department. Only one teacher was selected from any one school and only one school was selected in any one district. Fifteen teachers were selected for each department size.

Method

A structured interview by telephone was used to solicit the in-depth information necessary to answer the research questions. The data were collected during April and May, 1985.

Instrument

The Teacher Interview Form, developed by the researcher, was designed to collect specific demographic information, solicit information regarding the amount of perceived actual and desired esteem, perceived actual and desired autonomy, measures of job satisfaction associated with the teacher's position, and the intention to continue or discontinue teaching. A six-point Likert-type scale was used to record the responses. End points were labeled "essentially none" and "a very great amount". Ratings were obtained on several aspects of esteem and autonomy, independently for actual and desired. This procedure permitted calculation of discrepancy scores between actual and desired for each aspect of esteem and autonomy.

Summary of Findings

The teachers in this study were all experienced teachers and did not differ significantly by age or experience across school size: 96% had more than seven years of teaching experience and the mean age of the teachers was 41.3 years. More than one-half of the teachers (53%) had salaries in the $17,001 - $22,000 range. Only one teacher had a salary over $32,001. There was a significant relationship between salary and school size.

The traditional woodworking, metalworking, and drafting accounted for 73.3% of the teachers' assignments, although most teachers were aware that a technology systems based curriculum was being adopted in Illinois. The five characteristics related to school and community size (type of community, population, average daily attendance, department size, and class size) were highly inter-correlated.

The teachers desired and perceived to receive the most esteem from their students, followed by the professional respect of other teachers. The largest discrepancy, the difference between desired and actual, for esteem was found for those items related to respect for their industrial education program. There were some consistent patterns in the responses by department size. Teachers in smaller communities and schools perceived significantly more esteem for program respect, student respect, the professional respect of fellow teachers, and mean actual esteem than teachers in medium schools, while perceptions of teachers in large and medium schools were very similar. Comments related to esteem by the teachers indicated that many local communities did not value industrial education. One-third of the comments indicated that the teachers perceived some group(s) to have a negative attitude toward the industrial education program.

The teachers reported the most actual autonomy for being able to select where to purchase supplies and materials, followed by curricular freedom and personal use of the shop, especially in small departments. The least actual autonomy, and the greatest

discrepancy score for autonomy, was reported for control over the extra use of the shop or lab by other personnel and choice over whether to participate in extra assignments. Teachers in small schools had significantly greater freedom than teachers in large schools for their personal use of the shop. The most frequent comments by the teachers related to autonomy indicated that they had little or no control over the use of the shop by other personnel who consumed supplies, broke or abused tools, and generally left the shop or laboratory in a mess.

The teachers indicated a moderate amount of satisfaction with various aspects of their jobs (mean = 4.5 on 6.Ø scale). The teachers indicated the most satisfaction with being a teacher of industrial education and the least satisfaction with salary and benefits. There was a strong relationship between satisfaction with being an industrial education teacher and satisfaction with the students the teacher had in class. There were no significant differences for job satisfaction by department size.

In total, more than one-half of the teachers (53.3%) indicated that they did not intend to continue teaching or were unsure if they would continue teaching for the next five years. There was no significant difference, by department size, in the stated intention to quit teaching.

There was a low correlation between mean satisfaction and the intention to quit teaching. There was a low correlation between satisfaction with salary and benefits and the intention to quit

teaching. Actual salary was not significantly correlated with either mean satisfaction or the intention to quit teaching.

Mean satisfaction had a positive, moderate correlation with mean actual esteem. There was essentially no correlation between mean satisfaction and mean actual autonomy. There was essentially no correlation between the intention to quit teaching and either mean actual esteem or mean actual autonomy, although the intention to quit teaching had a moderate negative correlation with principal recognition. There was essentially no correlation between the stated intention to quit teaching and any of the demographic characteristics.

A multiple regression approach to predict general satisfaction identified, respectively, principal recognition, satisfaction with their teaching assignment, years in current assignment, and age. Together, these four variables accounted for 39% of the variance in general satisfaction, R=.63, significant at the .ØØ1 level.

Discussion

For a variety of reasons, the teachers felt that groups outside the school did not respect, and were not supportive of, industrial education programs. Comments regarding low community support were the most frequent comments made by the teachers. The perceived attitudes of the nebulous "community" may not have been entirely unfounded given that 73% of the industrial education programs were still organized around unit shops, with many programs essentially unchanged since the post World War II era. It is

possible that introduction of a technology education curriculum would improve the image of the program in the community.

It was suspected at the outset of this study that the issue of salary and benefits, although a factor, may not be the primary determinant of job satisfaction as had been suggested by the literature review. The results of this study indicated that actual salary had a significant but comparatively low correlation with satisfaction (r=.24). Mean satisfaction was most correlated with principal recognition (r=.49) and the intention to quit teaching was most correlated with the discrepancy between actual and desired recognition by the principal, (r=.32) in this study.

Many of the factors and conditions described by the teachers which related to the esteem and autonomy of industrial educators and their programs can be affected or improved by the actions of the building principal. While the teachers in this study were still teaching, the implication is that principal recognition and appreciation may be an important consideration in overall satisfaction and the intention to quit teaching. This intention to quit teaching may be more detrimental to the students in the long run than actually leaving the profession.

Conclusions

To the extent that the sample selected for this study was representative of experienced industrial education teachers, the following conclusions may be drawn from the findings and discussion:

1. Industrial education teachers have a great deal of pride in their profession. These teachers desire and receive high esteem from their students and peers but not from the community.
2. Industrial education teachers are generally satisfied with their jobs but have low satisfaction with their salary and benefits. There is a low correlation between actual salary and satisfaction with salary and benefits.
3. The overall job satisfaction of the teachers is related to the perceived amount of actual esteem but less related to the perceived amount of actual autonomy.
4. There is a low relationship between overall job satisfaction and the expressed intention to quit teaching. Neither actual salary nor the teacher's satisfaction with their salary is related to the expressed intention to quit teaching.
5. Teachers in small schools perceive that they have comparatively higher levels of actual esteem than teachers in medium departments and relatively more autonomy than teachers in large schools.
6. Industrial education teachers, when asked directly, consistently report the highest level of dissatisfaction with salary and benefits, similar to what has been reported in many other studies. However, when provided the opportunity, they identify other personal, professional, and teaching environment factors as being more highly related to satisfaction and the intention to quit teaching.

7. The results of this study indicate that changes in some non-salary areas could lead to improved job satisfaction and retention of industrial education teachers. These teachers are sensitive to their image and esteem in the school and in the community. Specific areas where improvements can be made include: (1) demonstrating greater recognition and appreciation by the building principal, (2) enhancing communications and/or relationships among the teachers and between the teachers and the community, and (3) granting industrial education teachers more control over their programs, budgets, and facilities.

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